Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Incorporated

JULY 1996

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting :	**Jul 5**	**Members' Night**
Meeting :	**Aug 2**	**Mr G Binns: UK Bird Reserves**
Excursion :	**Jul 7**	**Fungi at Nerrina: Mrs Florence Chuk (half day, commence 1:30 pm)**
Excursion :	**Aug 4**	**Enfield State Park: Mr Ron Hall**

President: Mr G Binns Ph: [redacted]
Secretary: Mr L Fink
Treasurer: Ms S Davison
Editor: Mr A Dyson

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PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350.

Meetings are held at the Art Building, School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard St South, commencing at 7.30 pm. **Excursions** commence from the corner of Sturt and Armstrong Sts., Ballarat, at 9.30 am for full-day excursions or at 1.30 pm for half-day excursions.

FIELD REPORTS

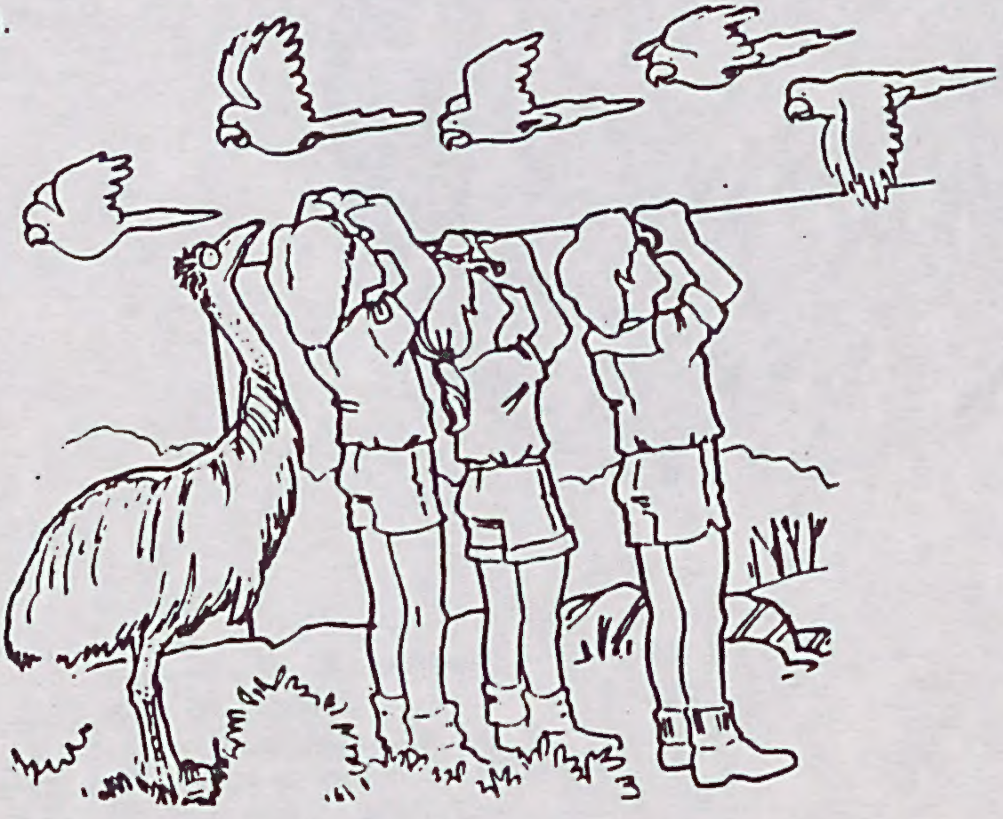
Del McDonnell - a Tawny Frogmouth has been a regular visitor to the McDonnell home at Invermay - a balcony being a favourite spot. The bird has been sighted regularly for over 3 months. Del also mentioned Yellow Robins seen regularly.

Carol Hall - 6 to 8 White-browed Babblers in a gully area at Mount Beckworth.

Alan Morison - Alan wonders if water rats are increasing at Lake Wendouree. He had seen 3 or 4 about the Fairyland area of the Lake. He had also seen a dead water rat, about 2 feet long, in Windmill Drive. Alans observations also included - a few groups of White-eyed Ducks at the lake - 8 Little Grebes at the southern end of Fairlyand and at Mount Cole/Langi Ghiran another pair of Powerful Owls added to those he has been watching for some time.

Helen Burgess - a koala enjoying the sun in her garden.

Ken Hammond - Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterels at Winter Swamp. Ken had also been out to the Ballan / Egerton area to see the Red-backed Kingfisher which had created much interest during the month.



DIARY DATES

Tuesday July 23, 7.30 pm - Committee meeting at [redacted]
(Pat and Bill Murphy).

AUSTRALIAN FUNGI MAPPING SCHEME

A reminder (see June newsletter) that Stephanie Davison has organised for the FNCV Fungi Kit to be added to our library. It includes advice on collecting and identifying, several leaflets and copies of the *Fungimap Newsletter*.

WHALES

Southern Right whales have been seen at Logan's Beach at Warrnambool during June. One of the whales has been identified and is known to have returned to the bay to calve for the seventh time.

FEATHERTAIL GLIDER

Acrobates pygmaeus

WOMBAT FOREST PARK EXCURSION June 9 1996

Members travelled in five cars to the Wombat Forest for the monthly excursion. The weather was fine but very cold and therefore jackets gloves and hats were suitable additions for added warmth during the day.

David Endacott, a Daylesford resident and our tour leader, first gave us a short address on various aspects of management in the Wombat forest.

Then, on tour, our first stop for the day was near the headwaters of the Werribee River where the river flats support a wide variety of lush green ferns and wonderful tall Peppermints, Swamp Gums and Manna Gums. Fungi were common in this area and included the jelly fungus, pixie parasols and bracket fungus.

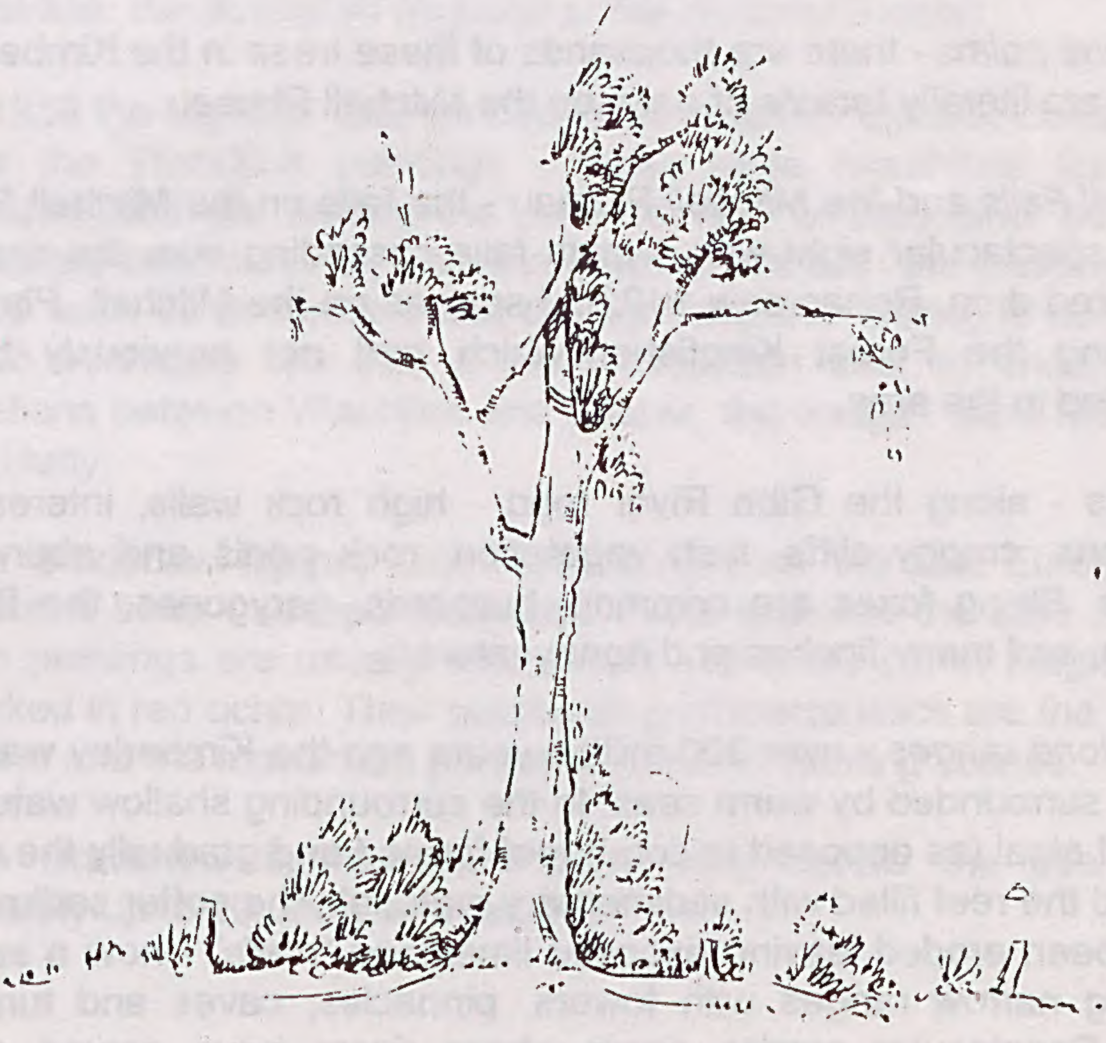
The second stop was at a logging coupe where debris was left to cover the ground. Many plant species here included Dianella tasmanica (the Tasman flax lily), Olearia erubescens (the Moth Daisy bush), Hardenbergia violacea (the Purple Coral Pea), Acacia dealbata (Silver Wattle), Acacia mucronata (Thin leaf Wattle), Acacia verticillata (Prickly Moses) and Acacia stricta (Hop Wattle). Also seen were Acacia aculeatissima (the Prostrate Wattle) and a patch of bright red flame fungus growing beside the road.

The third stop was along Camp Road in Bullarto South where members enjoyed their lunch and hot coffee. It was here where David enlightened us on further aspects of historical significance of the Wombat Forest.

The fourth stop, at Spargo Creek, involved a walk through a forest block, again near the headwaters of the Werribee River. We were told it was Powerful Owl territory. Fungi was a highlight of this landscape and included bracket fungus, coral fungus and jelly fungus. The tall trees were again a feature. We were told, because the area is not logged, future assessment of this part of the forest may provide interesting information on its growth and evolution, particularly as some of the trees were near the end of their life span.

The day concluded with a vote of thanks to David for a most informative day.

PJM



THE KIMBERLEY

Rohan Bugg spoke on this subject at our June meeting.

Rohan visited the Kimberley in June 1993 - starting at Wyndham and covering much ground westwards and across to the Mitchell Plateau then south and north east to Kununurra.

The Kimberley is an area larger than the state of Victoria and vegetation and land forms vary greatly in that area. Rohan showed slides demonstrating something of this variety:

Boab trees - these extraordinary trees with their fat trunks and swollen limbs and each with its own individual character. Rohan showed several dramatic pictures of the boabs.

Lagoons - including thousands of Whistling Ducks and masses of pink water lilies at Barry Lagoon.

Livistona palms - there are thousands of these trees in the Kimberley. There are literally forests of palm on the Mitchell Plateau.

Mitchell Falls and the Mitchell Plateau - the falls on the Mitchell River are a spectacular sight with 4 main falls cascading over the rims of the tiered drop. Rohan saw 140 bird species on the Mitchell Plateau including the Forest Kingfisher which had not previously been recorded in the area.

Gorges - along the Gibb River road - high rock walls, interesting striations, craggy cliffs, lush vegetation, rock pools and abundant wildlife. Flying foxes are common, buzzards, gerygones, the Black Bittern, and many finches and honeyeaters.

Limestone ranges - over 300 million years ago the Kimberley was an island surrounded by warm seas. In the surrounding shallow waters a type of algal (as opposed to coral) reef formed and gradually the area around the reef filled with sedimentary material. The softer sediments have been eroded leaving exposed limestone "reefs" - now a series of long narrow ranges with towers, pinnacles, caves and tunnels exist. Spectacular gorges occur where rivers have carved gaps through the range. Rohan showed several slides of these fascinating ranges.

Bungle Bungle Range - about 300 km from Kununurra is an extraordinary landscape. The range is cut by ravines and bound by high cliffs up to 400 m. Impressive rounded rock towers striped orange and black (silica and lichen). At the edges of the range are a multitude of weathered beehive shaped domes.

Picaninny Gorge - the Picaninny Creek was nearly dry and the heavily grooved and rippled sandstone bed was exposed. The gorge runs for 12 km along the creek.

Aboriginal artwork - Rohan showed many pictures of aboriginal rock art including a section at Mount Agnes measuring 12 feet in length.

Our thanks to Rohan for sharing some memories of a great trip.

VD

KIMBERLEY ART (some details from an article in *The Heritage of Australia: the illustrated Register of the National Estate*)

In 1838 the explorer George Grey was probably the first European to see the Wandjina paintings - these large mouthless figures in headdresses are among the most famous of Aboriginal paintings. From the headdress rays emanate, which are both the feathers which were worn as decoration and the lightning the Wandjina controlled. Each Wandjina site had a living custodian and, to ensure good relations between Wandjina and people, the images were retouched regularly.

The Bradshaw figures take their name from the first European to describe them - Joseph Bradshaw - who explored the area in 1891. The paintings are usually very small - 20 to 30 cm in height - and worked in red ochre. Their outstanding characteristics are the finesse of line and the movement portrayed, often in hunting scenes.

The Bradshaw figures were there long before the Wandjinas, possibly up to 20,000 years before.

MAMMALS FOUND IN THE BALLARAT AREA NO 11(a)

Great Pipistrelle, Pipistrellus tasmaniensis
Order: Chiroptera Suborder: Microchiropterus
Family: Vespertilionidae

The Great Pipistrelle is one of the largest bats found in Australia.
Found in caves, abandoned buildings and in tree hollows. Its usual roost is in high rainfall areas. The most serious threat to this bat is the loss of roosting trees due to intense forestry operations.

Little is known of its biology and the species is poorly represented in museum research collections. The diet is usually moths but beetles, weevils and ants are also taken.
The Great Pipistrelle gives birth to a single young.

Its annual movements have not been thoroughly determined. In New South Wales it is suspected that some populations migrate from the highlands to the coastal areas and others probably hibernate.

Its status is considered sparse and although Ballarat is within its range it may not have been seen or recorded.

Elfin